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BUI TUAN

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## INDOCHINA AND THE MYTH OF COMMUNIST UNITY

ANNCR:

THE BORDER CONFLICT BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HAS DONE MUCH TO DISPEL THE MYTH OF A UNITED COMMUNIST FRONT IN INDOCHINA...AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT BY VOA'S BUI TUAN.

VOICE:

THE CONCEPT OF A UNITED COMMUNIST FRONT IN INDOCHINA TOOK SHAPE FORTY-EIGHT YEARS AGO, WHEN HO CHI MINH -- THEN A COMINTERN AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, SECRETELY FORMED THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY. AT THAT TIME, VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS WERE UNDER FRENCH RULE. THE PARTY PROGRAM CALLED FOR TOPPLING COLONIAL RULE AND REPLACING IT WITH A UNIFIED COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT FOR ALL OF INDOCHINA.

PART OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY PROGRAM WAS FULFILLED IN 1945 WHEN HO CHI MINH BECAME CHIEF OF STATE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. HO LATER RUSHED MILITARY AID TO THE LAO COMMUNISTS, LED BY PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG -- NOW PRESIDENT OF LAOS.

IN 1952, TWO NORTH VIETNAMESE DIVISIONS, ACCOMPANIED BY PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG AND MEMBERS OF THE LAO LIBERATION FRONT, FOUGHT THEIR WAY INTO LAOS, OCCUPYING THE NORTHERN PROVINCES OF SAMNEUA AND PHONGSALY, WHICH ENABLED THE PATHET LAO TO SET UP THEIR FIRST GOVERNMENT. THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED SAW A HIGH DEGREE OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LAO AND NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNISTS. THIS WAS NOT SURPRISING GIVEN THE PERSONAL LINKS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE AND LAO LEADERS. LAO VICE PRIMER AND FINANCE MINISTER NOUHAK PHOUMSAVAN, FOR EXAMPLE, FOUGHT WITH VIETNAM'S GENERAL VO NGUYEN GIAP AGAINST THE FRENCH IN THE MID 1940'S. AND

LAO PRESIDENT PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG WAS WORKING IN VIETNAM AS AN ENGINEER WHEN THE SECOND WORLD WAR BROKE OUT. HIS WIFE, A VIETNAMESE, HAD ONCE SERVED AS HO CHI MINH'S SECRETARY. IN ADDITION THE FATHER OF LAO PREMIER AND PARTY CHIEF KAYSONE PHOUVIHAN IS VIETNAMESE. IN THE LATE NINETEEN THIRTIES, MR. KAYSONE STUDIED MEDICINE IN HANOI, WHERE HE BECAME A CLOSE FRIEND OF GENERAL GIAP, THEN A PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

IN CONTRAST, SUCH LINKS ARE MISSING IN RELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST LEADERS. AT THE TIME THAT THE INDOCHINA COMMUNIST PARTY WAS FORMED, CAMBODIAN PREMIER AND PARTY CHIEF POL POT WAS A FIVE-YEAR-OLD BOY. FOREIGN MINISTER IENG SARY, AS WELL AS VICE PREMIER SON SEN WERE NOT YET BORN. AND, UNLIKE THEIR LAO COMRADES, THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS OWED HANOI LITTLE OR NOTHING.

THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY -- ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS PRACHEACHON -- WAS FOUNDED IN 1951 UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY. BUT THREE YEARS LATER IT CEASED TO EXIST -- AT LEAST AS A PRO-VIETNAMESE ORGANIZATION. THE REASON WAS THAT, IN SIGNING THE 1954 GENEVA AGREEMENT, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY IGNORED THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTY, FORCING IT -- WITH SOVIET SUPPORT -- TO ACCEPT THE RULE OF PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK. HUMILIATED, THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS CHANGED THE NAME OF THEIR PARTY FROM PRACHEACHON TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF KAMPUCHEA.

THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT THE SOME FORTY THOUSAND NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS ENCAMPED IN CAMBODIA IN THE LATE SIXTIES HELPED THE CAMBODIAN INSURGENTS TO BRING DOWN THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT IN 1975. BUT THIS COLLABORATION WAS MARRED BY SPORADIC CLASHES BETWEEN CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST TROOPS IN THE EARLY

1970'S. AND, NOW, THERE'S EVIDENCE THAT FIGHTING RESUMED WITHIN MONTHS AFTER AMERICAN FORCES WITHDREW FROM INDOCHINA

OBSERVERS NOTE THAT THE BORDER CLASHES BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA ARE TO A LARGE EXTENT THE RESULT OF POORLY DEMOCRATED BORDERS. BUT THEY AGREE THAT THE HISTORY OF STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES HAVE COMPLICATED EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT.

JS/PY